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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 537 - APRIL 6, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. LEBANON. OUR TEL AVIV DEFENSE ATTACHE REPORTED THAT SEVEN IDF SOLDIERS IN A STATION WAGON WERE AMBUSHED BY THE PLO YESTERDAY EVENING THREE KILOMETERS SOUTH OF TYRE. THREE WERE KILLED, TWO ARE MISSING AND TWO ESCAPED. THE ISRAELIS MAY BE TEMPTED TO EXACT SOME KIND OF RETRIBUTION, AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE INCIDENT COULD BE A STRONG CHALLENGE TO UNIFIL'S AUTHORITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

2. MEANWHILE, EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTED THAT 12 GENDARMES ACCOMPANIED BY UNIFIL TROOPS HAD BEEN STOPPED BY THE ISRAELIS WHILE THEY WERE EN ROUTE FROM TYRE TO THE CENTRAL LITANI BRIDGE. THE ISRAELIS SAID THEY WOULD LET TWO BUT NOT 12 THROUGH. THE GENDARMES, THEREFORE, RETURNED TO TYRE. THE LEBANESE REGARD THIS AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE FUTILITY OF TRYING TO DEAL WITH EITHER THE ISRAELIS OR THE PLO.

3. THE FRENCH ARE TAKING ON AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN UNIFIL. THE FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTRY SAID APRIL 5 THAT A FRENCH ARMY GENERAL WOULD SOON BE NAMED
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DEPUTY COMMANDER OF UNIFIL. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO STEP UP ITS CONTRIBUTION, DISPATCHING ABOUT 500 ARMED FORCES ENGINEERS, SIGNALMEN AND OTHER TECHNICIANS. THERE IS ALREADY A 600-STRONG FRENCH PARATROOP CONTINGENT THERE.

4. THE FRENCH ARE APPARENTLY PLEASED TO BE TAKING A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE LEVANT. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HAD VOLUNTEERED FRENCH FORCES IN THE SPRING OF 1976 TO POLICE A CEASEFIRE DURING THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. THE ISRAELIS AND SYRIANS, HOWEVER, VIEW THE FRENCH WITH SUSPICION. THE ISRAELIS, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV, WELCOME FRENCH EFFECTIVENESS, BUT WORRY ABOUT ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE FRENCH POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE REGION. THE SYRIANS ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT A RETURN OF THE COLONIAL POWER. ON THE OTHER HAND, MOST LEBANESE WELCOME THE FRENCH -- RIGHTIST CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS HAVE CALLED FOR EVEN GREATER FRENCH PARTICIPATION.

5. DESPITE SYRIAN AND LEBANESE DENIALS, SUPPLY CONVOYS FOR THE PALESTINIANS CONTINUE TO ARRIVE ON A DAILY BASIS IN LEBANON. SOME OF THE SUPPLIES AS FOODSTUFFS AND OTHER

HUMANITARIAN AID, BUT MUCH ARE ARMS AND AMMUNITION. OUR DAMASCUS DEFENSE ATTACHE ESTIMATES THAT IRAQI CONVOYS TRANSIT SYRIA EACH DAY; KUWAITI CONVOYS HAVE ALSO BEEN SENT TO LEBANON, BUT THEIR AID SEEMS TO BE HUMANITARIAN IN NATURE. CONVOYS ARE OFTEN MARSHALLED IN THE DAMASCUS AREA. (CONFIDENTIAL NOFORN)

6. ISRAEL. ISRAEL'S PERCEPTION OF THE EC-9 HAS REMAINED GENERALLY FAVORABLE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT THE EUROPEANS HAVE NOT ISSUED PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS REGARDING THE MIDEAST, EMBASSY TEL AVIV COMMENTED. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE SOME INITIAL SUCCESSES WITH INDIVIDUAL DIPLOMACY, SOME NEW CRACKS AND TENSIONS HAVE BEGUN TO EMERGE IN THE ISRAELI-EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP.
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THUS, ISRAEL SEEMS NOW TO PERCEIVE ITSELF AS FACING ANOTHER PERIOD OF EROSION IN EUROPEAN EVENHANDEDNESS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. SYRIA. A SOURCE OF OUR DAMASCUS DEFENSE ATTACHE SAID THAT THE NEW DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE, ALAWITE BRIG. IBRAHIM AL-HASSAN, WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED WHEN THE AIRCRAFT HE WAS FLYING CRASHED APRIL 1. SYRIAN AUTHORITIES BELIEVE THE CRASH WAS SABOTAGE AND ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE A KEY ALAWITE FIGURE, THE SOURCE REPORTED. THE ALAWITES ARE VERY EDGY ABOUT THE INTERNAL THREAT TO THEM, AND SECURITY MEASURES HAVE INCREASED NOTABLY OF LATE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

8. JORDAN. RECENT DOMESTIC TURBULENCE HAS PERSUADED KING HUSSEIN TO REVIEW EXISTING OUTLETS FOR POLITICAL EXPRESSION IN JORDAN. HE MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO FORESTALL FUTURE DISTURBANCES. EFFORTS TOWARD GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT WOULD PROBABLY INCLUDE SOME KIND OF REVIVAL OF JORDAN'S PARLIAMENT. THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT WAS SUSPENDED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1974 RABAT SUMMIT DECISION, WHEN HUSSEIN WAS UNABLE TO RESOLVE HIS DILEMMA ON A MEANS TO INCLUDE PALESTINIANS IN THE ELECTORATE.

9. ANY INTENTION TO REVITALIZE DOMESTIC POLITICAL LIFE, HOWEVER, WILL LIKELY COMPLICATE HUSSEIN'S ABILITY TO LEAD JORDAN INTO MIDEAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. WHILE APPROACHING THE ISSUE FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, CONSERVATIVE JORDANIANS AND LEFTISTS AGREE THAT AMMAN SHOULD REMAIN OUT OF THE CURRENT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE TALKS. IF ACCORDED PARTICIPATION IN A RECONSTITUTED ASSEMBLY AND ASSURED OF A SYMPATHETIC HEARING IN THE LOCAL PRESS,
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LEFTISTS WILL HAVE GREATER LEVERAGE TO INFLUENCE THE
KING'S RESPONSE TO ANY PROPOSAL THAT JORDAN ASSUME A
MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS. (SECRET) VANCE

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